

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows (a marked-up copy of the claims is attached at the end of this Response):

1. (Amended - Clean Copy) A rechargeable battery, comprising:
- a prismatic cell case having short lateral walls and long lateral walls; [and]
- a group of electrodes accommodated inside the cell case, the group of electrodes including a plurality of positive and negative electrode plates arranged alternately and substantially in parallel to the long lateral walls of the cell case with an intervening separator therebetween; and
- a plurality of collector plates, wherein lateral edges of respective lead portions of the positive electrode plates and the negative electrode plates are attached to the collector plates, whereby the group of electrodes is held by the collector plates;
- wherein said lateral edges of the positive electrode plates protrude beyond the negative electrode plates on one side, and said lateral edges of the negative electrode plates protrude beyond the group of positive electrode plates on the opposite side, the protruding portions forming the lead portions.

Please cancel claims ~~2~~ without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

~~3~~² (Amended - Clean Copy) The rechargeable battery of Claim 1, wherein the collector plates are provided with curved portions at both ends thereof for clamping the group of electrodes.

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4. (Amended - Clean Copy) The rechargeable battery of Claim 1, wherein:
a plurality of cell cases are coupled together as one piece with the short lateral walls of the cell cases being mutually integrated, thereby constituting an integral battery case;
upper open ends of the cell cases are closed by an integral lid member; and
the collector plates in adjacent cell cases are connected to each other via a connection fitting that extends through the short lateral walls between the adjacent cell cases.

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~~3~~³ (Amended - Clean Copy) The rechargeable battery of Claim ~~4~~³, wherein
through holes are formed in the short lateral walls between two adjacent cell cases;
and
the connection fitting comprises a pair of frame fittings, each frame fitting having a base end and a protruding portion that is inserted into the through holes, distal ends of the protruding portions being welded together, and the collector plates being attached to the base end of the frame fittings.